

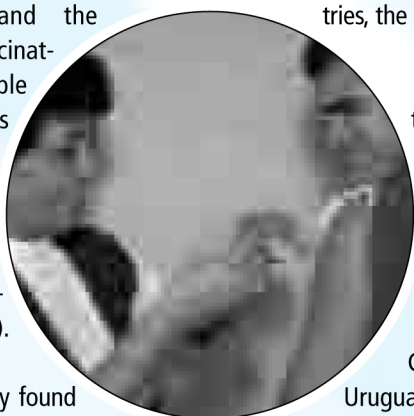


The Pan American Health Organization is an international public health agency with 100 years of experience in working to improve the health and quality of life of the peoples of the Americas.

Flu Vaccine Use Growing in Region

A growing number of countries in Latin America and the Caribbean are vaccinating their vulnerable population groups against influenza, following recommendations made by the Pan American Health Organization/World Health Organization (PAHO/WHO).

A recent PAHO survey found that 37 percent of its member countries have incorporated the flu vaccine into



their national vaccination programs, most during the past 10 years. In several other countries, the vaccine is available in the private sector.

Only a few countries have data on flu vaccine coverage, but those that do—Bermuda, Brazil, Chile, Cuba, Honduras, and El Salvador—have exceeded the PAHO/WHO targets of vaccinating 50 percent of the elderly by 2006 and 75 percent by 2010. The targets were set by the 2003 World Health Assembly, which called on WHO member countries to increase vaccination of all high-risk groups: the elderly, people with chronic disease, and health care workers.

Chile has been using flu vaccine since 1975, and along with Brazil and Uruguay included flu vaccination for the elderly and other high-risk groups in its Vaccination Week in the Americas drive last April. Brazil plans to vaccinate 12 million people over 60 during this year's vaccine week.

Most of the countries purchase their flu vaccine from private laboratories. In the past two years, only six have used the PAHO Revolving Fund for Vaccine Procurement to purchase flu vaccine. PAHO encourages countries to use the fund, both to reduce costs and for quality control.

The survey also found that two-thirds of the region's countries have influenza surveillance programs. Brazil's focuses on viral strains circulating in tropical zones, providing critical information for WHO's recommendations on the composition of the flu vaccine (see story next page). ■